

# The Evolution of

# PART ONE Bunker Hill

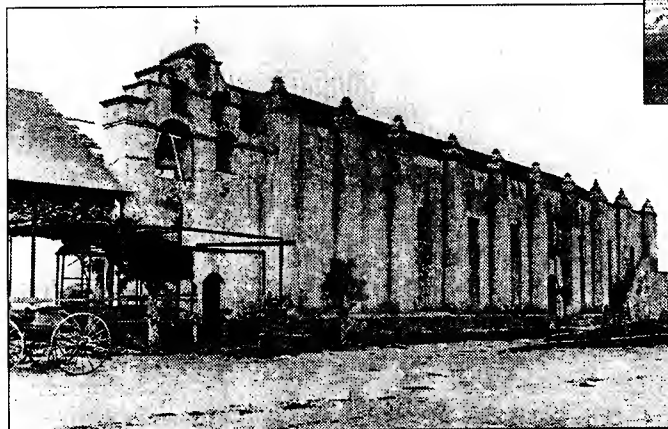
Former Community Redevelopment Agency Principal Planner Yukio Kawaratani has spent the last few years assembling more than 600 documents, studies, reports and photos relating to the history of Bunker Hill. Parts of these have been turned into the Bunker Hill Historical Presentation, a series of nine poster-boards detailing

## PART ONE OF A NINE-PART SERIES

ing distinct chapters in the evolution of the community. Over the next nine weeks the L.A. Downtown News will run excerpts of the text and photo collection.

### THE PUEBLO, 1769-1866

The occupation of California by Spain began in 1769, when Gaspar de Portola led a Spanish expedition from San Diego to San Francisco Bay. When they crossed the Los Angeles River, they encountered Yang-na, the Indian village of the region. The Indians were later subjugated and renamed the Gabrieleno tribe after the San Gabriel Mission, founded by the Spaniards and missionary Father Junipero Serra in 1771. Based on a plan from Governor Felipe de Neve, the Pueblo of Los Angeles was founded in 1781 with 44 settlers from Mexico. The pueblo's plan had 50-foot house lots around the plaza and seven-acre farm lots nearby between the Zanja Madre irrigation canal and the Los Angeles River. Across the river were the commons and pasture lands. A century of pastoral living on ranchos with long-horned cattle grazing followed. The Pueblo of Los Angeles was the social and trading center for the ranchos. In 1822, the Spanish period ended with Mexico's successful revolt for independence. Then, America's victory in the Mexican War resulted in California becoming a territory in 1848 and reaching statehood in 1850. The Ord Survey, Plan de la Ciudad



*The San Gabriel Mission.*

Security Pacific Collection/Los Angeles Public Library

de Los Angeles, set up the present street grid system in Downtown Los Angeles. The survey extended along and up to the base of the geologic dome formation that was later called Bunker Hill. The gold rush of 1849 brought many people to California. Los Angeles became a roisterous boomtown from 1849 to 1857 because of the high demand and prices for beef from the ranchos. When the gold pickings became slim, the big bust came to the ranchos and the town of Los Angeles. Compounding their debts, a series of drought years started in 1862, which ruined the ranchos. Many were foreclosed, broken up, subdivided and offered for sale as farm acreage.

**Next week: The Rise, 1867-1925**



Security Pacific Collection/Los Angeles Public Library

*Drawing of Los Angeles in the early 1850s.*



From the book "Panorama: A Picture History of Southern California"

*Drawing depicting Yang-na, a Native American village.*



Security Pacific Collection/Los Angeles Public Library

*The Plaza: The earliest known outdoor photograph of Los Angeles.*

Portola Expedition  
Discovers Yang-na

1769

Father Serra Founded  
San Gabriel Mission

1771

Pueblo of Los Angeles  
Founded

1781

California Becomes  
United States Territory

1848

Ord Survey of  
Los Angeles

1849

California Goldrush  
Creates Boomtown

1848-57

The Bust & Drought  
Ruin Ranchos

1857-65

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# Bunker Hill

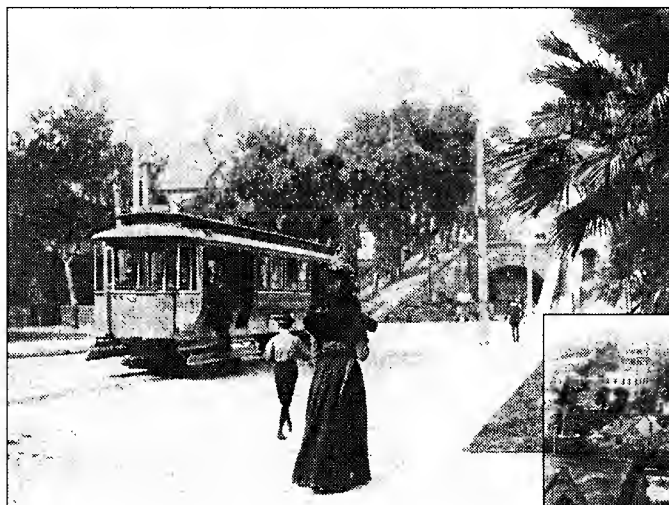
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poster-boards detailing distinct chapters in the evolution of the community. The L.A. Downtown News is running excerpts of the text and photo collection.

### THE RISE, 1867-1925

Development on steep, barren Bunker Hill started when Los Angeles only had about 5,000 inhabitants. Prudent Beaudry, a prominent entrepreneur who later became mayor, bought at public auction 20 acres of the Hill for speculation. Through his efforts and others, water, streets and a successful subdivision were brought to Bunker Hill. In 1874, he petitioned the city council to name the street at the top Bunker Hill Avenue. With the land sales pitches and the 100th anniversary of the famous battle in Boston, the name gradually became associated with the entire hill. Victorian mansions, apartments and hotels were built primarily in the 1880s and 1890s and made Bunker Hill a fashionable place to live. It was where many of the town's leading doctors, lawyers and merchants constructed their mansions and raised their families. The hotels, like the 200-room Melrose, were luxurious and elegant places to hold Downtown society gatherings and celebrations. The prominent Hill, rising over 100 feet in the air, provided a splendid view overlooking Downtown, farms along the river and far into the countryside. But the Hill was a physical barrier inhibiting Downtown's expansion to the west. In 1901 quaint Angels Flight funicular, constructed by entrepreneur Col. Eddy, provided a convenient access up and down the Hill. The Third and Second Street tunnels, bored through the Hill, provided



Security Pacific Collection/Los Angeles Public Library  
Street car at Third and Hill streets.



Security Pacific Collection/  
Los Angeles Public Library

Bunker Hill in the 1890s,  
Hill between Second  
and Third streets.

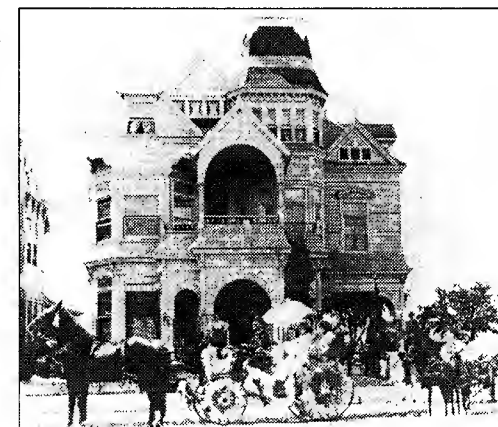
Downtown with improved access to housing developments to the west. The Hollywood route of the "Red Car" also arrived at the Fourth and Hill terminal by way of a subway tunnel under Bunker Hill. During the first quarter of the century, as Downtown land values rose, many of the homes and mansions were replaced by more profitable commercial, hotel and apartment structures that completed the rise of Bunker Hill.

To see previous installments of "The Evolution of Bunker Hill" visit the L.A. Downtown News website at [www.LADowntownNews.com](http://www.LADowntownNews.com)

**Next week: The Decline, 1926-1944**



Security Pacific Collection/Los Angeles Public Library  
Hill Street at Fourth Street.



Security Pacific Collection/Los Angeles Public Library  
The Bunker Hill home known as The Castle.

# The Evolution of <sup>PART THREE</sup> Bunker Hill

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### THE DECLINE, 1926-1944

Due to its central location, Bunker Hill continued to be a physical and traffic barrier to the city growing up around it. The development of the Central Business District bypassed it by extending southward and then westward. With very few new or replacement buildings for the many aging and deteriorating wooden frame structures built in the decades before and after the turn of the century, Bunker Hill slowly declined. More and more hotels, apartments and mansions were converted into rooms for rent as living on Bunker Hill was no longer fashionable. Modest

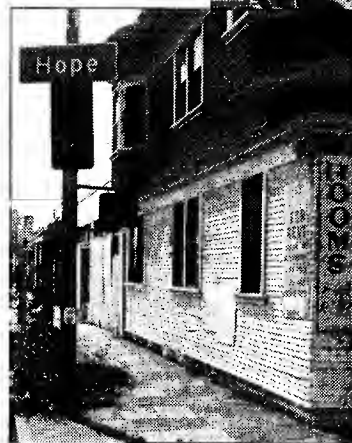
income families, single men and transients found Bunker Hill a convenient place to reside in the center of town. It had a great view. Within walking distance were the many products, services, jobs and transportation facilities of Downtown, and yet it was isolated from traffic, noise and other urban distractions. Artists lived there who, like Leo Politi, loved to make paintings of the old 19th century mansions. The depression of the 1930s heightened the demand for low rent apartments and cheap rooming houses. The population became skewed toward low-income immigrants and transient single men. By the 1940s, the housing stock was severely deteriorated and crime, fires and health conditions worsened. However, any action to alleviate the problems were postponed by World War II, as all housing was needed for new arrivals to the work force.

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**Next week: The Studies, 1945-1959**



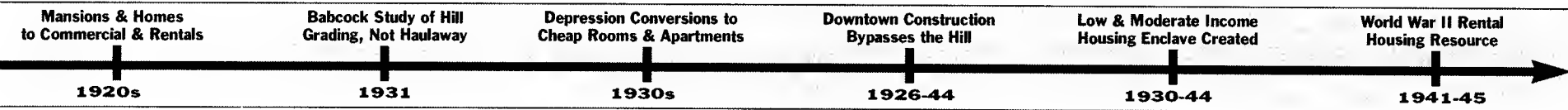
Makeshift retaining walls.



Rooms for rent.



A deteriorating wooden apartment building on Bunker Hill.



PART FOUR

# Bunker Hill

## The Evolution of

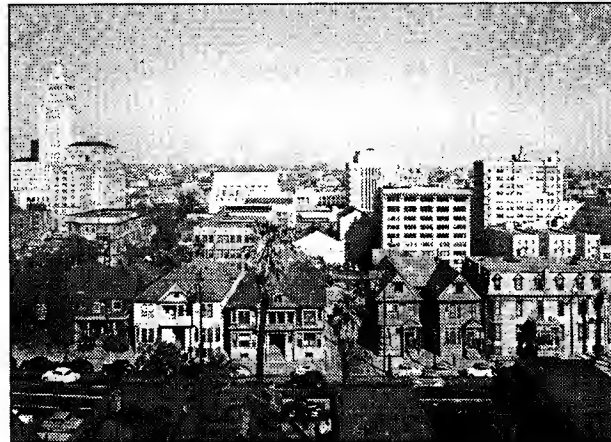
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### THE STUDIES, 1945-1959

The passage of the California Community Redevelopment Law in 1945 and Title 1 of the Federal Housing Acts of 1946 and 1949 provided cities with legal and financial support for combating urban blight by the use of redevelopment. The Los Angeles City Council created the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles (CRA) in 1948. William T. Sesson, Jr., a businessman from a prominent family, became the first board chairman for 17 years. Surveys and early planning studies for the CRA were conducted by the City Planning, Health and Housing departments. They showed that Bunker Hill had many problems, as about 82 percent of the housing units were deteriorated, overcrowded, unhealthy and unsafe. The high cost of health, fire and police services far exceeded the taxes collected from Bunker Hill. The many low-income single men, transients and indigents who lived there attracted and created a Skid Row type of environment. In 1956-57, architects Pereira and Luckman and other consultants conducted studies and prepared reports, plans and sketches for the proposed Bunker Hill Redevelopment Plan. The federal government



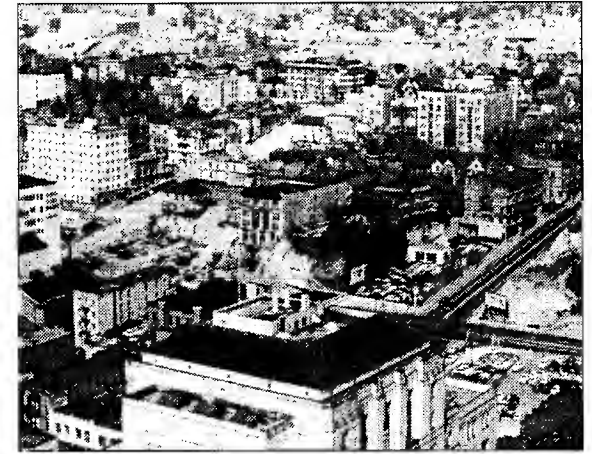
Mansions lining Grand Avenue.

photo by Leonard Nodel

then approved applications submitted for major loans and grants to help fund the redevelopment plan. After a year of many public hearings, the Bunker Hill Urban Renewal Project was approved by the City Council on March 31, 1959. Five lawsuits were immediately filed challenging the redevelopment plan, but, later, in 1964, after proceeding through the lower courts, the California Supreme Court upheld the plan.

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**Next week: The Start, 1960-1969**



Bunker Hill viewed from City Hall.

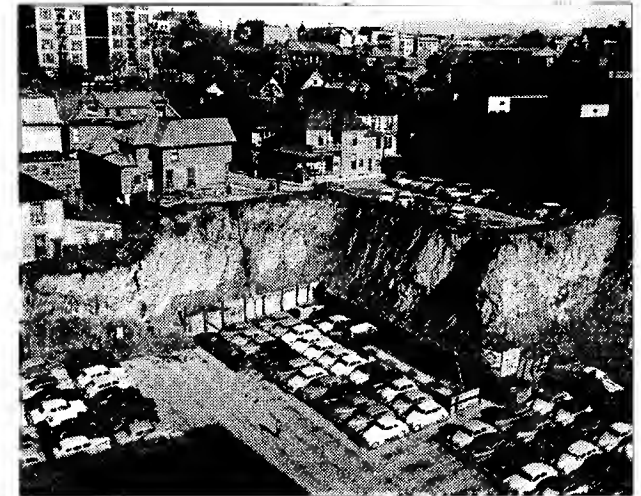
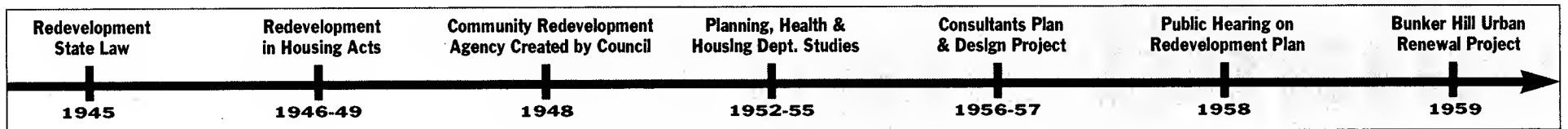


photo by Leonard Nodel

Topographic changes near Second and Hill streets.





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### THE START, 1960-1969

The redevelopment process began with surveys of residents and businesses, appraisals, negotiations, acquisition of property, relocation of residences and businesses, demolition of structures and site clearance. They were primarily completed in the first five years. The CRA purchased 285 properties (95 percent through negotiation, not condemnation), helped to relocate 5,617 residents and 442 businesses, and removed 393 structures. The first new building to be constructed was the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph equipment building with its microwave tower for transmitting long-distance calls. In 1964, New York architect I.M. Pei prepared a significantly revised design plan for Bunker Hill to guide new development. The new multi-level street system was designed by Barton Aschman Associates, traffic consultants from Chicago. During the second half of the decade, planning, engineering and construction of the totally new street, lighting and utility systems in the western half of the project were coordinated with the sale of Bunker Hill land. The redevelopment investments and activities were gradually rewarded by the attraction of major developments, including the 42-story Union Bank building by

# PART FIVE Bunker Hill

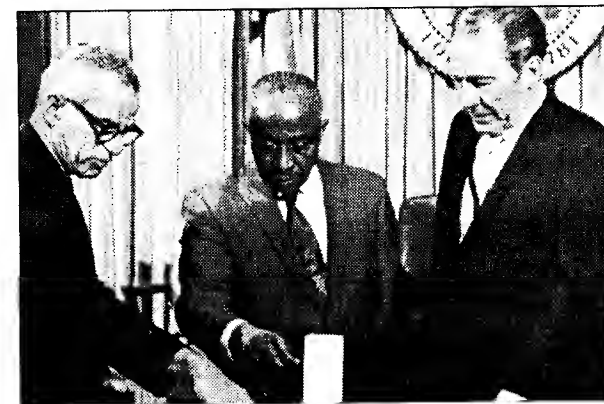


photo by William Reagh; Security Pacific Collection/Los Angeles Public Library  
A CRA site office on a Downtown hilltop.

Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, the project-wide central heating and cooling plant, and the Bunker Hill Towers with 715 apartments in three high-rise buildings. In 1969, major regrading of the top of the hill to construct the two-level street system and to facilitate the construction of future development required that Angels Flight Railway be dismantled and stored for future reinstallation.

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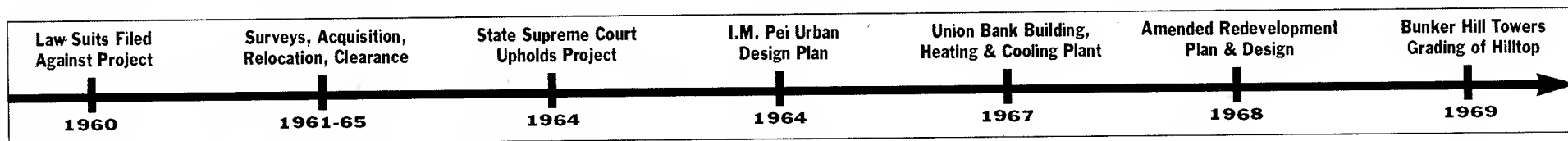
**Next week: The Signings, 1970-1979**



A CRA official (left), City Councilman Gil Lindsay (middle) and Mayor Sam Yorty.



photo by William Reagh; Security Pacific Collection/Los Angeles Public Library  
The Union Bank building with two mansions which were to be preserved and relocated.



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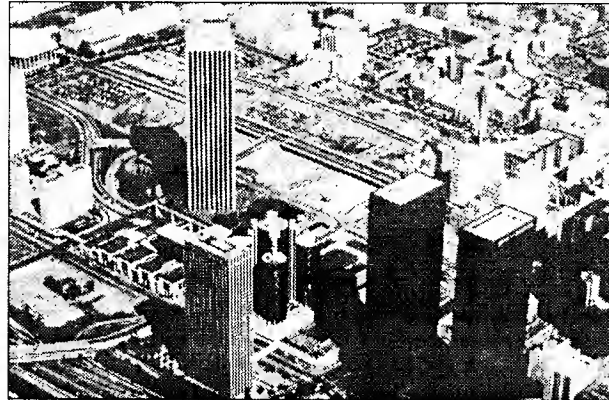
## PART SIX Bunker Hill

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#### THE SIGNINGS, 1970-1979

Many document signings in the 1970s between the CRA and developers resulted in development and land sale agreements covering 19 major office, housing and hotel buildings in the Bunker Hill Project. Five buildings were constructed in the decade: the 55-story world headquarters of Security Pacific National Bank (now Arco Center), the unique five-cylindrical Bonaventure Hotel, the World Trade Center building, the Park garden offices (now Figueroa Courtyard) and the ARCO parking structure. Committed to by mutually signed agreements were six sites of the Promenade apartment complexes, four senior housing towers of Angelus Plaza, the Los Angeles Marriott Downtown (formerly Sheraton Grande), Wells Fargo Center I and II (formerly Crocker Center) and the Citicorp Center (formerly 444 South Flower) office building. During the decade, intensive peripheral parking and Downtown People Mover studies were conducted to help solve Bunker Hill's parking, traffic and transportation problems. Fueled by a promised federal grant, the Downtown People Mover, extending from the Convention Center to Union Station through Bunker Hill, came within



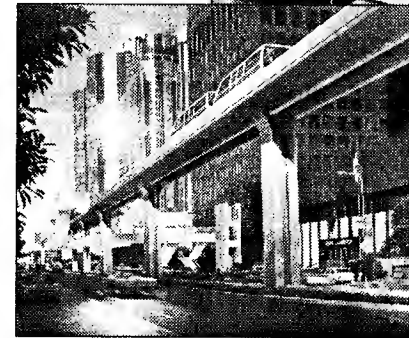
A northeast aerial view of Bunker Hill in 1978.

90 percent of fruition, but newly elected President Reagan terminated funding for the project. Another significant CRA action of the 1970s was the creation of a Bunker Hill Housing Trust Fund, whereby Bunker Hill tax increments would be used to achieve the construction of thousands of affordable apartments throughout the city. After the Watts Riots and subsequent adoption of the Watts Redevelopment Project in 1968, the CRA allocated Bunker Hill funds for ongoing financial assistance to the Project.

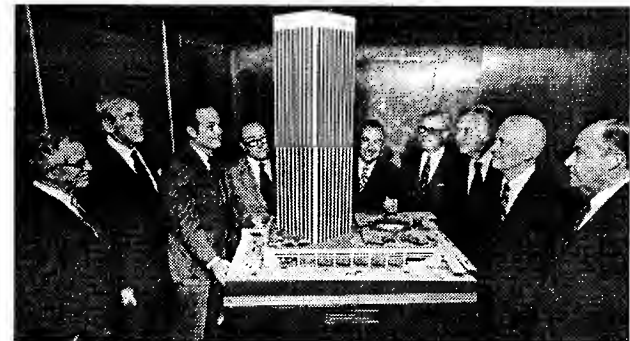
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**Next week: The Boom, 1980-1989**

The Westin Bonaventure Hotel, one of five major structures built during the decade.



The proposal for the Downtown People Mover, which came within 90 percent of fruition.



The unveiling of the Security Pacific National Bank model.



# The Evolution of

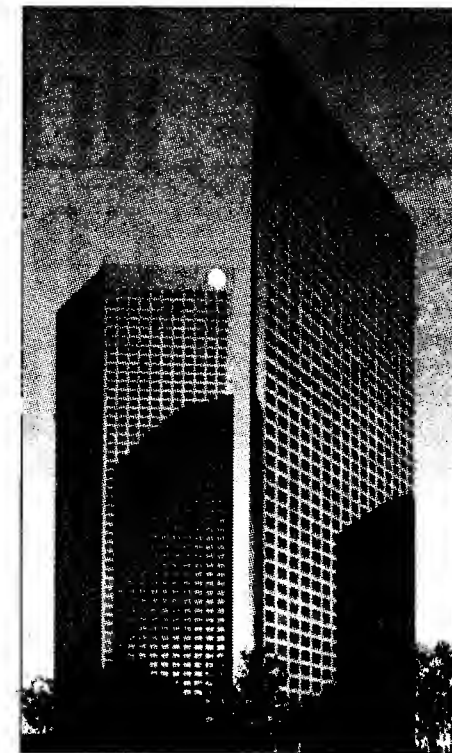
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### THE BOOM, 1980-1989

The booming 1980s saw 18 sizable buildings constructed. They included 10 residential, five office, one hotel and two cultural buildings. Construction projects carried over from the signed agreements of the 1970s included: nearly 900 apartment units on four of the Promenade apartment sites; 1,090 senior apartments in the four Angelus Plaza towers; the Marriott Downtown Hotel; Wells Fargo Center I & II; and the Citicorp Centre office buildings. In 1980, the CRA conducted a nationwide competition for the right to develop 11 acres of choice land at the top of Bunker Hill. The five alphabetically designated parcels were affectionately nicknamed "RUSTY." The proposed California Plaza development by Bunker Hill Associates and their architect, Arthur Erickson, won over four other competitors. They then proceeded to build the California Plaza I office building and the Museum of Contemporary Art. Other projects constructed in Bunker Hill during the decade included the 400 South Hope office building and the Stuart Ketchum Downtown YMCA, which was built on the roof of the Arco parking structure. Additionally, about 10,000 affordable apartments, funded by the Bunker Hill Housing Trust Fund, were constructed throughout the city.



Wells Fargo Center I & II, originally known as Crocker Center.

### Next week: The Outreach, 1960-1998

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# PART SEVEN Bunker Hill

The Grand Avenue entrance of the Museum of Contemporary Art.



photo by Barry Slobin

The late CRA Chairman Jim Wood guided the agency during its boom years. Wood served as chair from 1981-1993.



The Angelus Plaza senior housing complex created 1,090 apartments on Bunker Hill.

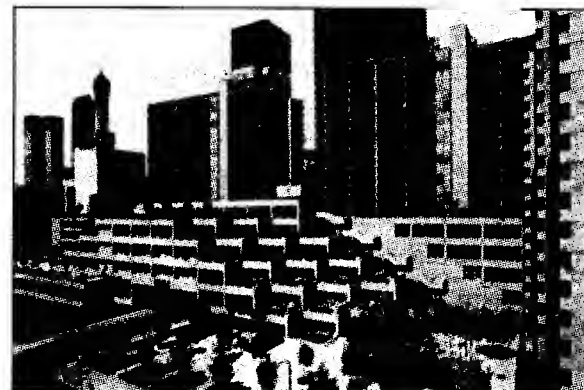
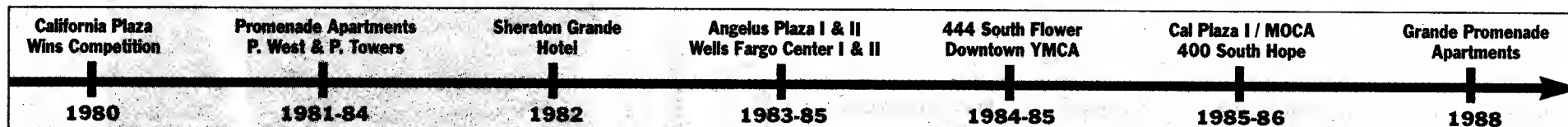


photo courtesy Dworsky Associates





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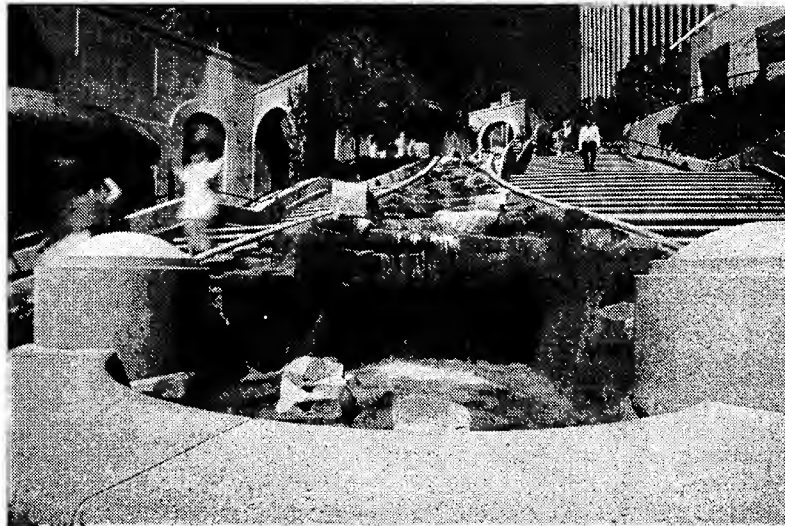
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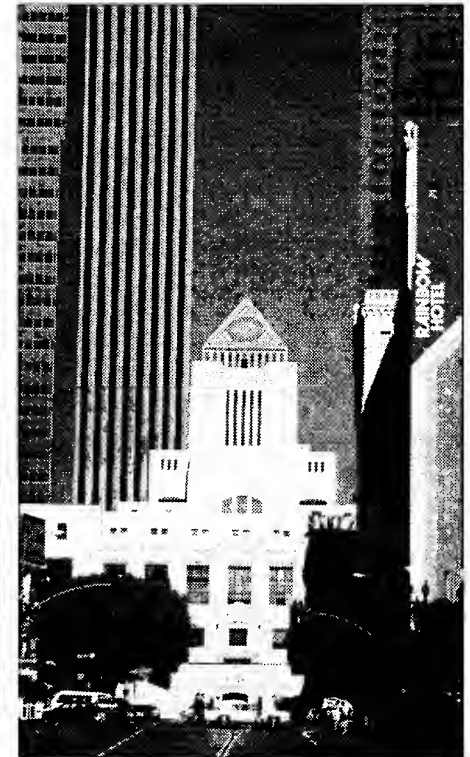
### THE OUTREACH, 1968-1998

The sphere of influence of the Bunker Hill project has reached out to many other areas of the city. However, its most significant accomplishment has been the revitalization of the Downtown area. At the time the Bunker Hill plan was adopted in 1959, decentralization of development in the region was rife and Downtown was in the doldrums. Wilshire Boulevard was becoming the private office center of the region. The renaissance of Downtown and its skyline were spurred on by Bunker Hill. Over the past 20 years, funds derived from Bunker Hill development have been utilized to accomplish the construction and rehabilitation of over 20,000 units of affordable housing throughout the city of Los Angeles. Project funds have also provided ongoing financial assistance to the Watts Redevelopment Project, start-up costs for the Hollywood Redevelopment Project, funding for the renovation and construction of the Los Angeles Library and Convention Center expansions, and various other community and public service projects. The sphere of influence and public benefits gained by the redevelopment of Bunker Hill for the city of Los Angeles has been considerable in a reach far beyond the geographic limit of the project itself.

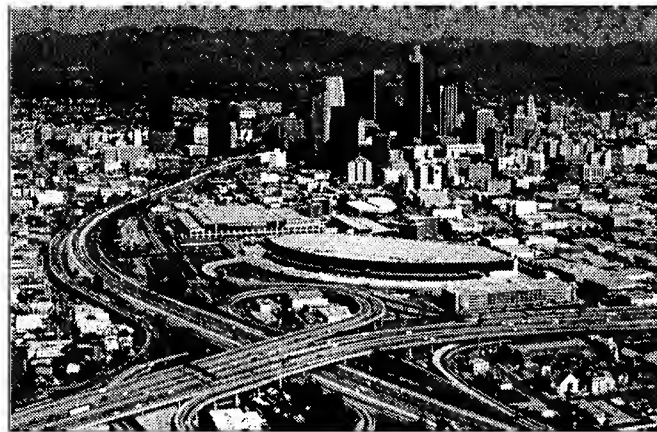
## PART EIGHT Bunker Hill



The Bunker Hill steps, which tie Bunker Hill to the Central Business District.



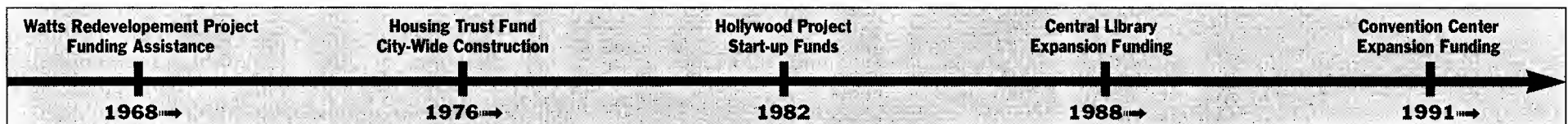
The Central Library renovation and expansion.



Downtown at a glance, with the Convention Center in the foreground.

### Next week: The Present, 1990-1998

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## THE PRESENT, 1990-1998

The recession, downsizing and an overbuilt office market in Downtown stopped all office construction during the 1990s, except for the California Plaza II office building, which had started in 1989. Other developments completed were the 500-room Hotel Inter-Continental, Museum Towers apartments, reconstruction of the historic Angels Flight Railway, and the Los Angeles County parking structure upon which the Walt Disney Concert Hall is to be constructed. In addition, early in the decade, Bunker Hill funds were utilized to facilitate and complete the major renovations and expansions of the Central Library and the Convention Center. Just finished on Bunker Hill is the Colburn School of Performing Arts. The Disney Concert Hall, designed by Los Angeles architect Frank Gehry, has received major corporate and family donations, and is scheduled to open in 2002. Of the original 25 blocks in the Bunker Hill Redevelopment Urban Renewal Project, only three-and-one-half blocks remain to be developed. About \$70 million in public investment in the Bunker Hill Project has stimulated an estimated \$3 billion in current development. Constructed to date on Bunker Hill are approximately 9 million square feet of office floor area, 500,000 square feet of retail spaces, 2,500 rooms in three hotels, 3,000 apartment units, and soon, five cultural facilities. Office buildings and residential apartments are planned for the remaining undeveloped three-and-one-half blocks. The "second rise" of Bunker Hill has been substantial and its impact on Downtown Los Angeles will endure for many years.

# PART NINE Bunker Hill



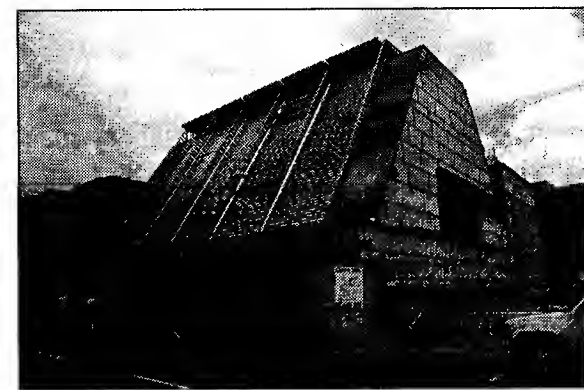
The top of Bunker Hill, taken at night.

photo courtesy CRA



The return of Angels Flight Railway again connects Bunker Hill to the lower environs of Downtown.

photo courtesy CRA



The new Colburn School of Performing Arts, on Grand Avenue, is part of the effort to make Downtown a 24-hour community.

photo courtesy CRA

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